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The Ancestral Trail

Cyber Challenge in the Next Dimension

47 Mandlebiot, Fearsome Fractal

Fatal fury of the deadly digital demon

Julek Heller

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Computer graphics produced by Mehau Kulyk

Mercury trickled down the sides of the cyber cruiser as the craft was sucked into the chasm. Inside, Richard frantically grappled with the controls in an effort to escape the force that was dragging them downwards.

"What can we do?" he asked Robo.

The familiar sound of the robot's sensors could be heard. "Imperative that buoyancy of cyber cruiser is increased," he said finally.

"How can I do that?" Richard asked.

For the second time, Robo reached over from his perch behind Richard and began to manipulate the flying machine's control panel. Lights flashed and buttons blinked as the robot's metallic claw sought a solution to their predicament. Without warning, there was a loud hissing noise.

"What was that?" Richard demanded.

"Have released cyber cruiser's air supply into interior of craft. Should sufficiently increase buoyancy to enable escape from mercury sea."

"And if it doesn't?"

"Air supplies will shortly expire."

Richard's heart raced. His robotic friend had taken a big gamble. He hoped that it would pay off.

Richard held tightly on to his seat as the cyber cruiser began to rock back and forth.

"Maximum engine thrust required," Robo instructed.

Richard did as he was told and pulled back hard on the joystick.

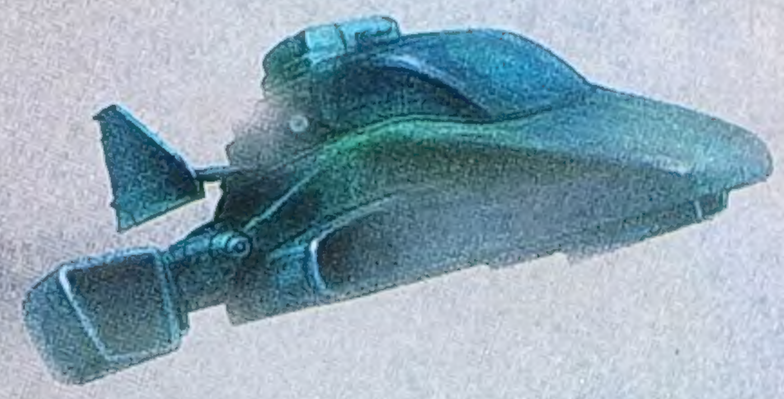
Escape from the chasm

The cyber cruiser's engines groaned as they struggled to attain full power. For a moment it seemed as if Richard's efforts would be wasted. Then the flying machine slowly began to pull away from the chasm.

"Robo, I think it's working!" Richard gasped in excitement.

Teeza whooped with delight as the craft slowly rose to the surface of the mercury sea. With a splash, the cyber cruiser was released from its liquid metal prison. It jetted skywards, black smoke billowing from the exhaust.

"One more Omni piece to find," Richard reflected quietly. "Then I can finally get out of this horrible place."



After searching his memory banks, Robo provided Richard with the co-ordinates to the location of the final Omni piece. "Warning," he announced, "Evil One will know that Richard is within reach of collecting complete set of Omni pieces. The way ahead will bring much danger."

Richard looked downcast as he steered the cruiser in the direction that his friend had indicated. "I'm getting used to living with danger," he replied glumly.

Peril from above

As they watched the ground beneath them slowly change colour, the three companions travelled on in silence. The dire, gloomy greyness surrounding the mercury sea gave way to a brown, earthy landscape that somehow seemed equally foreboding.

Richard took in the sights and was lost in his thoughts when a strange shape moving ahead of the cyber cruiser brought him back to his senses. At first he thought it was a thunderstorm that filled the skies ahead. However, Robo's shrill voice told a different story:

"Danger! Magnetic storm approaching," the robot warned. "Chosen One must land before control of cyber cruiser's internal drive mechanism is lost."

Suddenly, the cruiser began to shudder violently. "I think I've already lost control!" Richard shouted as the craft turned upside down.

"Badvibe!" said the trembling voice of Teeza, from beside Robo. An ominous rumble filled the air.

The cyber cruiser plummeted towards the ground like a stone. Inside the vessel, the three companions were hurled against its sides. "Robo!" Richard cried in desperation. "What's happening?"

"Magnetic storm has neutralized cyber cruiser's internal circuits," the robot replied. "Must leave vicinity of storm to regain control."

Richard wrestled with the craft's controls to no avail. From the window of the cruiser he could see the ground racing towards him. "Help!" cried Teeza.

TAILSPIN

Richard's eyes widened in terror as he prepared for the cyber cruiser to crash. The spinning craft was within moments of disaster. Richard suddenly gave a gasp of excitement as he realized that the controls were now responding to his touch. "Hold on!" he called. "I'm going to try to pull us out of this spin!"

The cyber cruiser screeched in dismay as Richard pulled the joystick back with all his might. The craft veered away from the ground in a sweeping arc and soared upwards to the sky. Teeza gave a joyful cheer. They had escaped death by the merest fraction.

Shaking from his exertions, Richard landed the cruiser and switched off its engines. "That was too close for comfort," he said.

"Magnetic storm was product of Evil One," Robo announced. "Storm's energy overrode that of cyber cruiser. Control returned when craft was far enough away from storm."

"So, the Evil One sent the storm," reflected Richard. "Let's take a look around here until it's gone."

The three companions left the cyber cruiser and explored the area. As Richard and Teeza stretched their aching limbs, the sound of their robotic companion's sensors could be heard. "There is peril here," Robo said finally.

"What kind of peril?" Richard asked.

Robo's sensors hummed once more. "Unknown," came the answer.

The three were standing on a desolate stretch of land. Its only features were the willowy peaks of stone that occasionally pierced the flattened horizon.

"I wonder where we are?" Richard pondered aloud.

"We are currently standing in Cyber Dimension," answered Robo.

"Thanks!" Richard replied with a trace of irony in his voice.

"Thanks," Teeza echoed.

It was then that Richard noticed something unusual at his feet. It was a small pool filled with strange fluid that bubbled and frothed as if it had a mind of its own. Beautiful coloured patterns danced and swirled about its surface.

INFECTED

Without thinking, Richard bent down and dipped a gloved finger into the liquid. The watery substance reminded him of dirty oil. He shook his hand and was surprised when the liquid stuck steadfastly to it. "How odd," he said, "I can't get rid of this stuff."

Richard's look of surprise turned to one of horror as the liquid began to grow and spread all over his glove, Soon it was completely covered.

All at once, Richard began to feel dizzy and nauseous. "Robo, something is happening to me," he said weakly.

A sudden burst of maniacal laughter made all three of them start. They had no idea where the sound was coming from. Richard moved to draw his sword but found that he was not able to. His hand was paralyzed. Furthermore, the strange substance on his hand was now spreading up his arm.

"Chosen One is infected with mandelfluid," said the shrill voice of his robotic companion. "There is no cure for fractal infection. Chosen One's quest is over."

Before Robo's words could sink in, there was an enormous explosion. All around the trio, the ground began to churn. With a gigantic roar, a vast, demonic creature burst from the ground. Dirty green in colour, the newcomer was humanoid in shape. Once again, the sound of laughter pierced the air. The noise came from the creature. Then it spoke:

"I am Mandelbiot," it said in a deep, booming voice. "I am the controller of this land. You are all my slaves."

THE FRACTAL CONTROLLER

Richard looked over to Robo and saw that a new binary message had appeared on Robo's front panel. By now the noxious mandelfluid had spread across his chest and part of his other arm.

With a look of scorn washing over its inhuman face, Mandelbiot approached Richard as he hastily began to decode his companion's binary message. "Robo – fire your lasers at him!" Richard cried.

The cackle of static sounded as the robot followed his instructions. Standing stiffly before the massive Mandelbiot, Robo fired several quick bursts of laser at the brute. "Laser fire is not effective," he said. "Must try alternative attack."

"Such as?" Richard called desperately.

There was no reply from his companion. Instead, the hum of the robot's internal processors could be heard as he attempted to find a weakness in Richard's latest foe.

Merciless attack

It was Teeza who broke the silence. "Go away!" he called to the giant form in front of him. "Teeza no like you! Badvibe!"

Mandelbiot's mocking laughter rang out once again. "Silence, parasite," said the monster, dipping its hand into one of the mandelfluid puddles and scooping up a handful of the oily liquid.

Teeza gave a yelp of panic as Mandelbiot threw the contents of its hand in the direction of the little creature and scored a direct hit. The wigmat stopped in his tracks and began to quiver in fear as the liquid quickly spread over his body. He looked towards Richard, who was still busily decoding the binary message.

"Richard! help!" Teeza yelled.

The voice of Mandelbiot drowned out the wigmat's weak tones. "The Evil One is displeased. You have been causing him great concern. I am here to do the job that others have tried to do."

A snarl could be seen on the creature's face as it continued: "Only this time I will do it properly. You are doomed."

Suddenly, Richard gave a cry of triumph. Then a dejected look crossed over his face. "Robo!" he said. "I've decoded the message – but I don't understand it!"

Richard felt himself go faint. The mandelfluid now covered his upper torso and most of his legs. It seemed to be draining all his strength away.

"I must try to concentrate," he told himself. "I have to find the meaning of that message."

Then, at last, it came to him. He opened his eyes wide and allowed himself a small smile.

"Robo," Richard asked. "Does Mandelbiot have a function?"

The robot's sensors hummed again as he scanned the creature. "Mandelbiot is computer-generated equation in fractal form. Function is to give correct answer to all mathematical questions."

"I think I understand what you mean," Richard said with a new air of confidence. He turned to face his foe.

"Mandelbiot," he said defiantly, "I have a question for you."

The creature's face lit up for a second. "I can answer any question there is."

"What is one plus one?" Richard asked.

Easy as pi

Mandelbiot roared with rage. "Boy, you mock me," the creature scowled. "The answer is two! Don't waste my time!"

Richard continued: "Try this one instead... What is four plus four?"

"Eight! stupid boy!"

"Tell me then," Richard said, "What is the complete value of pi?"

Mandelbiot stopped moving for a moment and a blank look came over its face. It began to breathe heavily.

"There is no answer to that question, fool!" Mandelbiot roared.

"Yes there is!" Richard urged. "You must tell me!"

The giant gathered its senses. "Three!" it spat out.

"Tell me more!" Richard continued.

"Point!"

"Carry on!"

"One!" Mandelbiot bellowed in rage.

Richard regarded his foe and noticed that the creature was beginning to shrink. The effort of performing the calculation was taking its toll.

"Four!" Mandelbiot bellowed.

Teeza broke in. "Richard, look," he said, pointing at his friend's body armour. "Bad stuff going."

Sure enough, the mandelfluid was evaporating away as if it had never existed. At once, Richard no longer felt faint. His strength began to return.

"One!" Mandelbiot shrieked, getting smaller all the time.

"Let's go!" Richard ordered.

"Five... nine... two... one... four... two... nine..." Mandelbiot continued.

The trio ran towards the cyber cruiser. As they fled, strange shapes began to emerge from the ground around them. The sound of Mandelbiot reciting an endless stream of numbers provided an eerie backdrop to the scene.

"What are they?" Richard asked Robo.

"Emerging forms are Tilomites," the robot replied. "Mandelbiot enslaved them by covering them with mandelfluid. Fractal infection is now clearing. Chosen One has liberated them."

"Are they dangerous?" Richard demanded as he ran.

"Negative. They are Chosen One's friends."

The three reached the cruiser and prepared for takeoff. Mandlebiot's voice was growing weaker as Richard closed the doors. Suddenly, there was a tapping on the window. Richard turned to see a strange creature standing by the cruiser. It appeared to be made from stone.

"What do you want?" Richard asked.

"I am Gomm, leader of the Tilomites. I thank you for your brave deed," said the newcomer in a gravelly voice. "You have freed us from centuries of torment. I am here to repay you."

"Go on," Richard urged. "The only help I can give is to offer you a warning."

"A warning?" Richard repeated.

"Look not for trouble from outsiders," Gomm reflected. "The real evil is closer than you think."

"Danger! Chosen One must leave area," Robo abruptly cut in.

"Hold on," Richard said. "I must find out what Gomm is talking about."

Into the skies

"Danger! Takeoff imperative!" Robo insisted.

Frowning in frustration, Richard switched on the engines and the cruiser soared into the skies. As Gomm receded into the distance, a gigantic explosion sent the cruiser reeling. Had they not taken off when they did, Richard and his friends would have been destroyed by the blast. Robo's extraordinary sensors had saved them again.

Richard took the craft close to the surface. There was no sign of Mandelbiot or the Tilomites. He shook his head and steered the craft away from the scene of devastation.

SHOOMI'S SANCTUARY

Enter into the Cyber Dimension and engage optical recognition to find...

▶ Shoomi and Shoobi

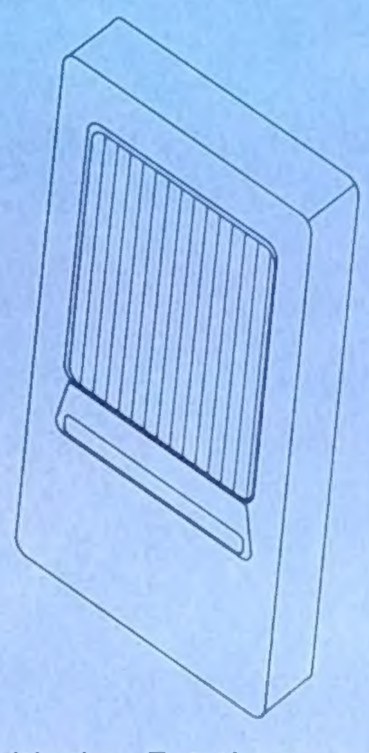
Shoomi and Shoobi are still keeping up with our hero's adventures in the Cyber Dimension. Study the illustrations in this issue and see if you can spot them.

In issue 46 Shoomi and Shoobi were on page 722.

▶ Computer Challenge

Hidden somewhere in this issue is a vitally important computer component from the sinister Cyber Dimension. Use your visual skills to help Richard and his new friend Teeza locate it in less than three minutes.

When you have discovered the component's hiding place, can you guess what it is and what its function might be?



In the last issue, a hand-held computer was hidden on page 725. Even though hand-held computers are small in size, they are very powerful. Hand-held computers can be used to run many of the programs designed for their larger counterparts. Some use hand-held computers as portable diaries and personal organizers.

▶ Competition Details

In each issue you will find letter blocks. Cut these out and keep them safe. When you have collected 26 letter blocks, you will be given a clue which will help you form them into a sentence that reveals the fatal flaw in the Cyber Dimension. The prize for the competition is a super Sega Mega Drive, complete with a copy of the great new role-playing game Shining Force.

Details on how to enter the competition will be given in a later issue.

NB The competition will be open to residents of the UK and Eire only.

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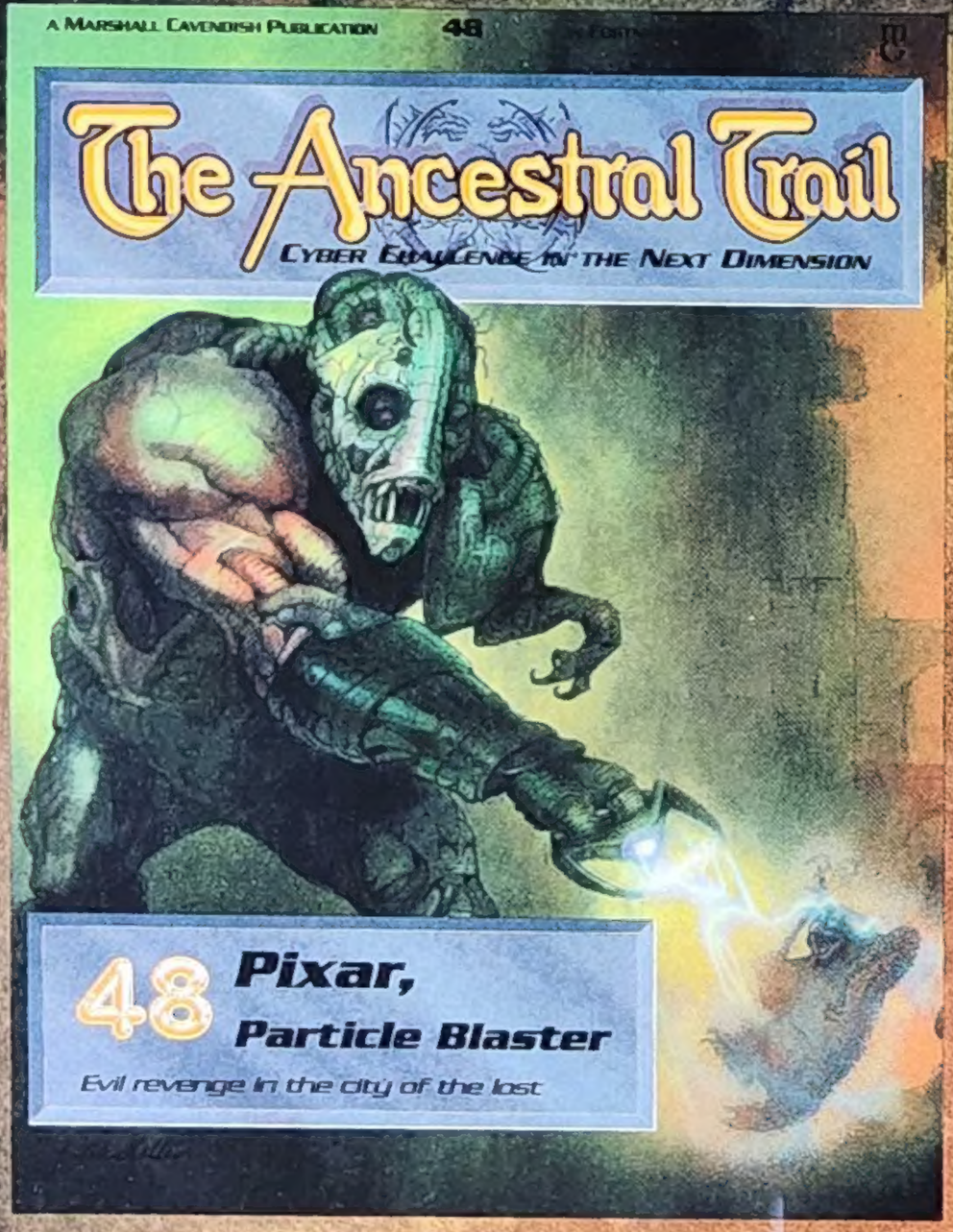

In Issue 48

Pixar, Particle Blaster

Richard continues his search for the last Omni piece. But first he must defeat Pixar, possessor of one of the most fearsome weapons Richard has yet encountered.

plus

- ▶ Another **Techscan** card
- ▶ 4 more **Cyber Power** cards
- ▶ More **Cyber Chess** pieces for your collection

Coming in Issue 49

Malachit, Evil Incinerator

The three adventurers are taken prisoner by the Evil One's Dark Robots. Richard must fight for his life if he is to survive his latest ordeal.

plus

Another **Techscan** card ▶ 4 more **Cyber Power** cards ▶ More **Cyber Chess** pieces for you to collect.

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